

The Coming of the American Revolution: Empire Protest and Revolution



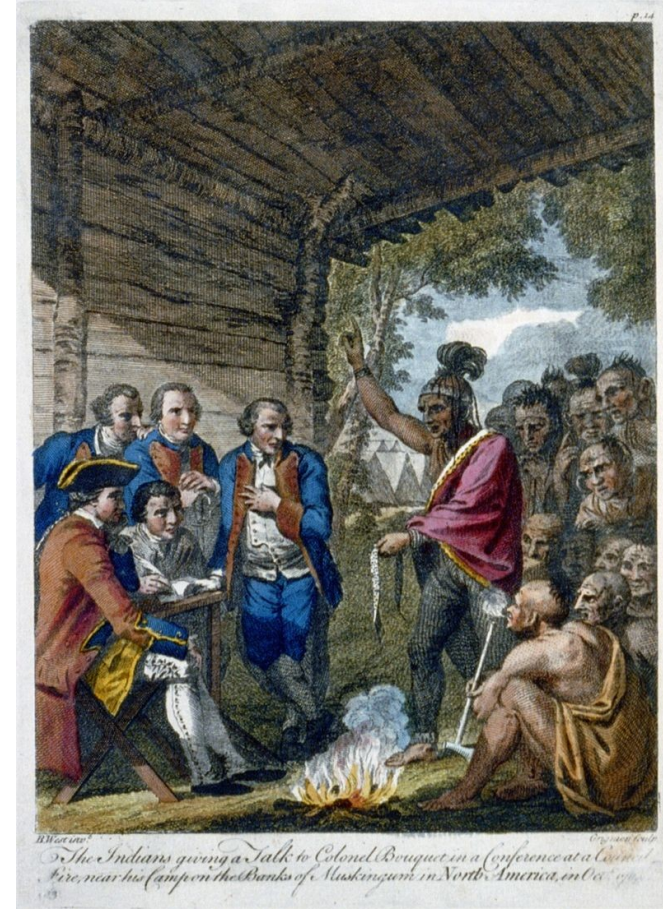
Governments and “Rights”

- By the mid 1700s,
 - Free, white Americans believed they had certain “English liberties” by right as Englishmen.
 - Trial by jury, government by consent, rule of law, the ownership of slaves, etc.
- Colonial governments were largely left to their own devices despite formal structures.
 - The British government rarely intervened, elected assemblies dominated, and most free men could vote.
 - This had arisen largely by accident.
 - Free white Americans assumed this was how the empire was “supposed” to work.

The Seven Years' War and Pontiac's War



Braddock's Defeat by French and Indians, 1755



Contemporary illustration of negotiations at end of Pontiac's War

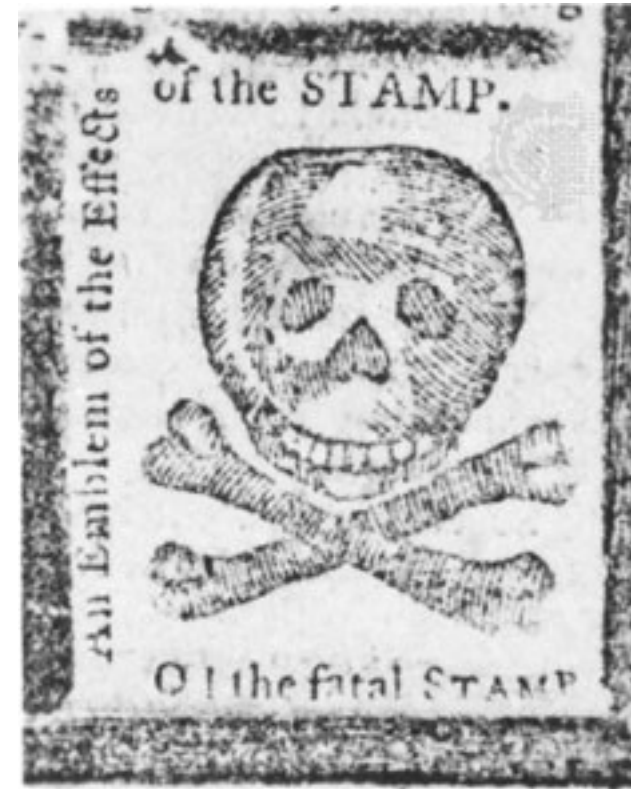
The Roots of Discontent

- Could be seen in aftermath of the French and Indian War and Pontiac's War.
 - Removal of the French threat
 - Economic devastation and high local taxes
- Incorporation of the Catholic French into the empire
- Prevention of westward settlement
- **Consolidation and taxation of the British Empire**



Taxation and Resistance

- The Stamp Act (1765)
 - Required that most printed materials carry a stamp purchased from the government
 - Intended to pay for British soldiers in North America
 - A major departure from past taxes
- Most American **appear** to have opposed the act



Suggested design for stamps by a Pennsylvania Newspaper

Forms of Resistance

- Elite forums
 - Resolutions and debates in colonial assemblies
 - 1765 Stamp Act Congress in New York
- Popular (usually worked with elites)
 - Boycotts
 - Corresponding Committees
 - The “Streets”
- Resistance was successful.



British-manufactured tea pot sold in America

Continued Conflict and Resistance

- The Townshend duties of 1767
 - New taxes on goods imported into the colonies
 - Boycotts began in 1768
 - Ultimately resolved through compromise
- The Tea Act of 1773
 - Intended to help the East India Company import more tea into the American colonies
 - Intended to get Americans to buy the taxed tea instead of smuggled tea.
 - Resistance to the act quickly developed

The Boston Tea Party

- The Tea Party
 - December 16, 1773
- A group of colonists boarded East India Company ships dressed as Indians.
- They dumped 300 chests of tea worth about \$4 million in today's money.
- Many colonists outside of Massachusetts condemned the Boston Tea Party.



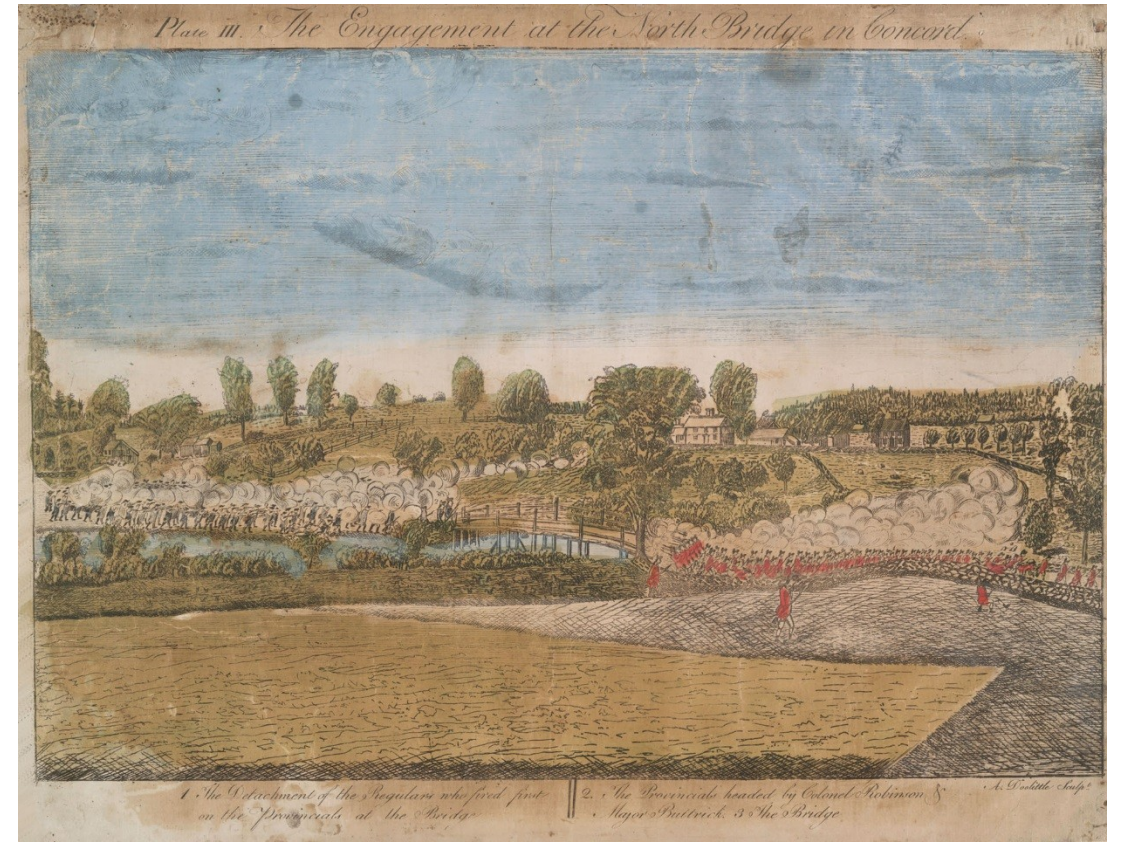
The Coercive Acts

- The British viewed the Tea Party as an act of vandalism and rebellion.
- Parliament passed the Coercive Acts in 1774
 - Intended to punish Boston and end “disorders”
 - Americans
 - Called them the “Intolerable Acts”
 - Saw the acts as an assault on American freedom
- By 1774, both Americans and the British were increasingly losing patience with and trust in one another.

The First Continental Congress (1774)

- A reaction to the Coercive or “Intolerable” Acts
- Twelve of thirteen colonies sent delegates
- Divided into three groups
 - Conservatives
 - Moderates
 - Radicals

Lexington and Concord



Depictions of Battles of Lexington and Concord, 1775

Why not independence?

- Fifteen months passed between the start of the war and the Declaration of Independence.
- Why?
 - Pride in the British empire
 - Belief that membership in the empire had concrete advantages
 - Believe in monarchy
 - Fear
 - What happens if they lose?
 - What happens if they win?

Thomas Paine and *Common Sense*

- Thomas Paine
 - An Englishman
 - Emigrated to Pennsylvania in 1774
 - Quickly joined radical American groups
 - Wrote *Common Sense* in early 1776
 - Would go on to support the French Revolution and argue in favor of various radical causes

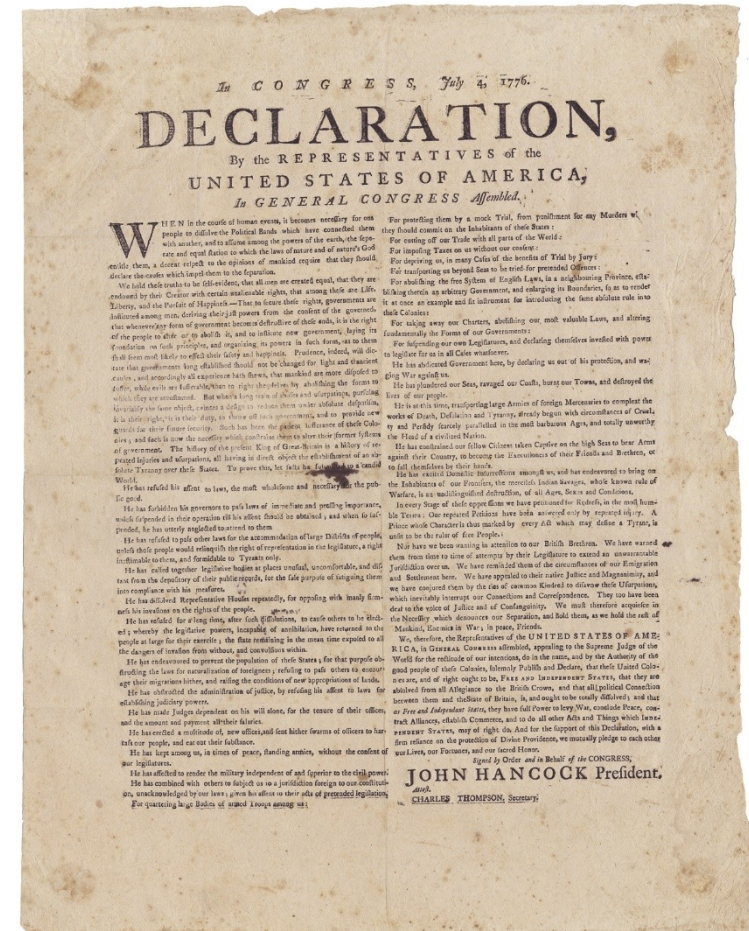


Common Sense

- A relatively brief pamphlet of 77 pages that argued for immediate American independence.
- *Common Sense*
 - Began with an assault on monarchy and hereditary succession and support for democracy.
 - Attacked the idea that America benefitted from the empire.
 - Argued that the American cause was a universal one.
- None of Paine's arguments were original.
- What was original was that *Common Sense* was written for the common man to read.
 - It sold 10,000s if not 100,000s of copies.
 - Most Americans likely accessed the pamphlet in some way.

The Declaration of Independence

- On July 2, 1776, Congress formally declared independence from Great Britain
 - Twelve states voted for independence. New York abstained.
- Many individual members either voted against independence or abstained.
- Even in July 1776, the colonists were divided
- On July 4, Congress approved the actual declaration drafted by Thomas Jefferson.
 - At its core a list of grievances against the King for ignoring traditional “English liberties”
- Those liberties were now framed as universal rights.



The Revolutionary War

- Eight years of fighting
- The British had more men, material, and military skill.
 - Many Americans supported the British.
- The “patriots”
 - Kept their armies in the field.
 - Won several crucial battles.
 - Gained European support.
 - Exhausted the British
- In 1783, the British recognized American independence.

